(c) and (d) Special efforts have been made to improve upon the working conditions of female workers through the implementation of the following initiatives:

*The Cell is administering a Grants-in-aid Scheme for the welfare of women labour. This Scheme is administered through voluntary organizations by giving grant-in-aid to them for providing awareness generation amongst women workers.

*Monitoring the implementation of the 'Equal Remuneration Act, 1976' which aims at ensuring payment of equal remuneration to men and women for the same work or work of a similar nature without any discrimination and for prevention of discrimination against women in recruitment as well as in conditions of service, such as promotions, training, transfers, etc.

*As a follow up action on the judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, in the case of writ petition No. 666-70 of 1992 filed by Vishaka & Ors. Vs State of Rajasthan & Ors. laying down certain guidelines for the prevention of sexual harassment of women employees in their work places.

Global survey report by ILO

3119. SHRIMATI N. P. DURGA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether the International Labour Organisation in a global survey report which was released in May, 2003 states that women constitute the single largest group discriminated against at work place with low wages, adverse working conditions, low rate of employment and greater insecurity; and

(b) the steps taken by Government to end discrimination against women, provide equal opportunities at par with men and accord respectable position to them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) No Sir. The ILO's Global Report on 'Time for Equality at Work" does not mention that women constitute the single largest group discriminated against at work place. However the report mentions that women are often placed in the peripheral, insecure and

less-valued positions at the workplace. It also says women unemployment rates have almost always been higher than that of men.

(b) With a view to ensure gender equality at the workplace, the Minimum Wage Act, 1948; the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; etc. have been legislated in the country. The State Governments are empowered to initiate action against the violation of these Acts, whenever required.

House building loan/assistance to beedi workers

. 3120. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any provision in the new housing policy to provide house building loan to beedi workers from Employees Provident Fund;

(b) if so, the details thereof showing the eligibility criteria and the rate of interest on house building loan;

(c) whether Government are running or propose to start any scheme to provide assistance to beedi workers in house building;

(d) if so, the details thereof showing the number of beedi workers benefited by the scheme State-wise including the State: Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) and (b) There is no separate provision in the Employees' Provident Funds & Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 for Beedi Workers. As per the existing Scheme the member of the Employees' Provident Fund including beedi workers with five years membership are entitled to avail benefits of withdrawal for the purchase or construction of dwelling house/flat including the acquisition of a suitable site for the purpose.

The Central Board of Trustees, Employees' Provident Fund Scheme (EPF) in its 160th meeting held on 28.03.2003 has approved the Housing Scheme for the members of Employees' Provident Fund Scheme (EPF). The said scheme provides that the interest on loan will not be more than the average market rate at which housing finance is available and shall be at a rate agreed between Employees' Provident Fund Organization